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An Alphabet of Christ "A" - Apostle

Kent Hendrickson

Hebrews 3:1: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the **Apostle** and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

This reference to Christ Jesus as "Apostle" is the only occurrence in the New Testament. It occurs as the writer continues to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as superior to all that the Jews held in high regard. At this point in the epistle, Christ has been shown to be superior to prophets, angels and Adam. The verses following our quotation show Christ Jesus to be superior to Moses.

The link between Moses and our Lord is distinctly specified in the Old Testament. We might think of Deuteronomy 18:18, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." The fact that this Old Testament prophecy is linking Moses and Christ is confirmed by Stephen's words recorded in Acts 7:37, "This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear." In this passage from Acts 7, Stephen is drawing a parallel between the rejection of Moses and the rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel. While we do not have a reference to Moses in this passage as an "apostle," we do have scriptural authority for looking

for features "like unto thee" between Moses and the Lord Jesus.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words gives the meaning of "apostle" as: *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος, 652) is, lit., "one sent forth" (*apo*, "from," *stello*, "to send"). This is confirmed by the words of John 13:16, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him," where "he that is sent" is the translation of this Greek word. Since the contrast we are considering is with Moses, we should consider references to Moses as the "sent one." There are at least ten verses in the Old Testament that distinctly state that Moses was "sent" by God. As we would expect, these references begin in Exodus chapter three. Verses 13 and 14 are God's commission to Moses to go to the children of Israel, "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Joshua 24:5, where Joshua rehearses the words of the Lord God to the tribes of Israel, is another case: "I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out." One further quotation from Psalm 105:26 will support the fact that Moses was a "sent one" of God: "He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen."

Moving from Moses, we would like to meditate on references to our Lord Jesus Christ as the "sent one." While there are references to the Lord Jesus as being sent in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Galatians, and First John, we will find the majority of our references in the gospel by John. Out of approximately 55 references in the New Testament to Christ being sent, there are at least 41 direct references in John. Chapters 5 and 6 each contain 6 references, and chapters 7, 8 and 17 contain 5 references each. Truly our Lord Jesus Christ was the

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Thank you

"apostle," or "sent one," of the Father. To order our thoughts concerning this topic, we will consider the statements of our Lord regarding being sent under four headings: Will, Word, Witness and Work.

The "apostleship" of our Lord Jesus Christ is intimately associated with the **will** of God. He insisted repeatedly that His coming was vitally related to the will of His Father. How delightful are the words of John 4:34, "*Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*" Consider also John 5:30, "*I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*" In John 6:39 He speaks of the "*the Father's will which hath sent Me.*" In John 6:40 He again speaks of "*the will of Him that sent Me.*" His entire life was occupied with fulfilling the will of God. How appropriate in view of the prophetic words spoken of Him in Psalm 40:8, "*I delight to do Thy will, O My God.*" Hebrews 10:5-9 clearly shows that Psalm 40 is referring to the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

The **word** of God is also associated with our Lord Jesus being sent by the Father. In His confrontation with the Jews who opposed Him we have this statement in John 5:38, "*And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.*" In John 5:24 He had declared, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*" There was, and still is, a vital, life-giving, link between the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and faith in the Father who sent Him. This is not surprising, since He declared in John 14:24, "*the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*" What a remarkable fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:18, "*I ... will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.*" Christ was truly the preeminent "apostle" of the Father to declare His words to the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed the **witness** of His Father as to the fact that He was the sent one. In John 5:37 we have these words: "*And the Father himself, which hath*

sent me, hath borne witness of me." Again, in John 8:18, we have the defense of Christ against His opponents, *"I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."* We cannot help but think of the words from heaven at the baptism of the Lord Jesus, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17). This voice from heaven was heard again, as recorded in Matthew 17:5, on the mount of transfiguration; and yet again as recorded in John 12:28-30, as the Savior foretold of being "lifted up." What an unmistakable witness that Christ Jesus was the "apostle" of the Father.

Our Lord Jesus Christ declared plainly that His coming into this world, sent from the Father, was in order that He might "finish the **work**" of Him that sent Him. Again we refer to John 4:34, *"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."* On the basis of the Lord Jesus being sent from the Father, there is an essential "work" for all who hear the testimony concerning Christ. He said to the Jews in John 6:29, *"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."* In anticipation of His fast-approaching death, burial and resurrection, He could say in John 17:4, *"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."* How faithful this "apostle" was to the commission that He had been charged with.

As we have considered the Apostle of our profession, Christ Jesus, we can rejoice at how faithfully He fulfilled His responsibility as the One sent by the Father. We should also search our own hearts as to how closely we are living our lives according to the will and word of God. Are we finishing the work that He has given us to do? Will we receive the favorable witness of God in regard to our service when we give account of ourselves at the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:11-12)? We must not forget the words of Christ in John 17:18, *"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."* He was not praying for the eleven apostles alone, *"but for them also which shall believe on me through their word"* (John 17:20). We also have been sent into the world, not to be conformed to it, but to faithfully bear testimony to the "Apostle ... of our profession," Christ Jesus.

The Right Question!

The conscience of a young person may be more active than some of the older folk think. Some of us get in the habit of speaking disparagingly of the young, and we would like to see them begin where we have left off. We have had to grow and they have to grow. Well, then, do not expect too much of young believers. Remember how you had to grow, you had to learn little by little what a poor, wretched thing this world is, and you had to learn how Christ could make up for everything else. They have to learn it too; give them credit for being just as honest as you were. They want to live for God, but they come to me and say, "What do you think of thus and so?" It is generally some kind of amusement. They ask, "Do you think that it is all right for a Christian?" And I always say, "My dear young brother, or my dear young sister, don't you think that you are turning that around? Don't ask the question, 'Is there any harm in it?' but, 'Is there any profit in it? Will it really do me good? Would it be a blessing to me physically, spiritually, and in other ways? Will it help me to be a better testimony for Christ?' If so, do not be afraid of it. But if conscience says, 'It would not be profitable and it would not be a good testimony to others, it may mislead the weak, it will not lead me toward a deeper knowledge of Christ,' then say, 'I cannot, on the principle that the apostle lays down here, and I will avoid it.'" Let Christ be the one supreme Object of the devotion of your heart.

H. A. Ironside

Christ, the Center

Excerpted from "The Cross and the Spirit",
commentary on Galatians by
H.C.G. Moule

It would be somewhat as it fared with the Sun in the system of Ptolemy. The glorious orb was, of course, provided for, in place and sphere, in the old cosmogony; but he was only the most brilliant and powerful of the moving bodies which circled around Earth as their center. But Christ, in the true system of the Gospel, is the Copernican Sun. He is the immovable Center, glorious and supreme; the Lord and Sovereign of the whole moving order, its source of light and source of life; *"in all things having the preeminence."*

I may be allowed to pause here for a passing remark. There is a Judaistic element, may we not say, in every human heart. For where is the heart that, even religiously inclined, puts Jesus Christ into His wonderful right place in its inmost creed, by nature? In our ministration of the Gospel, let us remember this. I am strongly persuaded that we take it far too much for granted that habitual worshippers and habitual communicants see Christ aright (I mean in doctrine, in theory), see the personal and ever blessed Lord, in His incarnate, sacrificed, risen, living, coming glory, as "all their salvation." We do well to instruct them or to remind them, according to occasion and as far as there is time, in truths of the second order. But nothing, literally nothing, must be permitted to minimize our treatment of the supreme things, of the supreme thing, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is as true as ever that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness, folly, unto him; they are spiritually discerned." Our duty is not to forget this, and accordingly to lay ourselves out to be, if He pleases, His vehicles for His own spiritual teaching, by making the supreme truths of the supernatural Gospel the supreme thing in our ministry of the Word. They need all the emphasis we can give them.

In Richard Cecil's fragmentary writings, a storehouse of truth and suggestion, there is a passage to this purpose. It touches on the illustration just given from the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems. Take a totally uneducated

man, he says, and set yourself to convince him of the truth of the true system of the universe; to make him perfectly sure, against all the evidence of sight, and all the usages of human language, that the sun is stationary to the earth, and that the earth is one of the minor globes which roll round the sun as their imperial center. You will not find your task easy. You will need line upon line,, and explanation upon explanation. You are aiming at nothing short of a mental revolution. Even so it is, says Cecil, with the true preaching of the true Christ. The minister of the great mystery of blessing needs to remember that in more instances than he can guess he has to aim at being the vehicle, under God, of both a mental and spiritual revolution. He has, so far as he may, to show the mighty reasonableness of the affirmation that Christ is, for us sinners, all and in all. He has to speak so that he may ask his Lord to take the words and use them not only for the illumination of the reason, but for the glorification of Christ to the heart as the Sun and Center of everything; Lord, Life, Way, End, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption, Pardon, and Holiness, and Heaven.

Whatever God does has the stamp of His nature upon' it. It is wise, holy, kind, just and gracious; that which is not like God does not come from God.

What is a Laodicean?

J. B. Stoney

Revelation 3: 14-22

It is very important for us to understand what is the state of things in the church; and when I say "church", I mean the whole house of God, not the real thing, the body of Christ, but that which will be spued out of the Lord's mouth when He comes. It is very important for us who are on the verge of this, if not quite in it, to understand what will produce it.

We may say, thank God, we know we are of the true thing; but still it is a great thing for us to see what produces and conduces to this state of things that Christ will thus spue out of His mouth, so that we may not in any way be helping it on ourselves. In the beginning of Revelation 2, I find the church has lost her first love, and in the end of chapter 3, He will do without her as a witness.

In Laodicea the vessel of testimony is spued out of His mouth. And the terrible thing is that as soon as He thus rejects it, there is another power ready to pick it up – a power that rises and says, This just suits me! The church unfit for Christ is fit for the beast. As soon as Christ has done with the church, **the beast** will arise and say, I will carry it, as we get it in chapter 17. Now this is a terrible thing – a very serious thing, if we lay it to heart, to see how it is produced; and I think none of us can escape censure on the point, though we may escape judgment. For it is evident that Laodicea springs out of Philadelphia; it is evident that the state of the last of the churches is consequent upon the preceding one.

What then is a Laodicean?

There are four phases of the church of God which run down to the end; these are Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea: Thyatira being Romanism; Sardis, the Reformed religion; Philadelphia, the last revival – the most brilliant unfolding of the truth that had been lost; and after this, Laodicea, Latitudinarianism.

I will explain first what a Laodicean is, and seek to apply it to our conscience afterwards.

A Laodicean, then, is one who has got Philadelphian light and has not got Philadelphian power. You see, a Laodicean is not in a system; he is neither in Romanism nor in Protestantism, and you must be in either of these two to be in system. I trust this will come home very closely to every one of us. It is a very important thing to get light, and light does lead out of system; but light is not everything.

A Laodicean is one who has got light, but who has not that which the light should produce. Hence the Lord appears to Laodicea, saying, "*These things saith the Amen, the faith-*

ful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God". A Laodicean says what even a rich man would not say: "I ... have need of nothing". I would say to any such, "You have got the light, but you have not got Christ in power."

A Rationalist said, "I have got rid of the author of Christianity, but I have kept the morality of it", and that is just what the beast might say. What does he want Christianity for? He wants Christianity to improve the man so that he may be independent of God. The Christianity of the present day will result in Babylon, that great city where there will be the aggregate of all that suits man upon earth, where everything that magnifies him will be brought together, where man will get on without God.

We are not Babylon, and, thank God, never shall be the harlot; but we are warned that we fall not into the state of things that will characterize her. I may say here, there are two great structures going on at this present moment – the new Jerusalem and Babylon; the one the bride of Christ, the magnificent display of all that He is; the other all that naturally suits man; every natural beauty will be found in it. The one, all of Christ, when there is nothing of Adam; and the other, where there is nothing of Christ. Just as the bridegroom forms the bride, so it is here: everything in the new Jerusalem will suit Christ.

She will come down from heaven, having the glory of God, to show out the beauty of Christ here upon earth, where we have all failed. In Babylon, on the other hand, will be found all that gratifies man. People often say, What is the harm in this or in that? But that is not the way to put it. The question, whether it be a bit of furniture or a bit of dress, is whether it suits Christ or whether it suits man. Is it meeting man in his natural tastes, or is it meeting Christ in the counsels of God? God tells us what things are coming to, in order that we should not in any wise contribute to them. What a sad thing it is to think that the light we have may only minister to our condemnation!

If you receive the light that comes out of Philadelphia, and do not at the same time refuse the human element, you are preparing for Laodicea.

Suppose any one says to me, I know I have received the grace of Christ. I say, That is all very well; but what are you studying? Are you trying to improve people's natures – trying to make a man good-tempered or temperate? Then you are working at the old creation. And you have got light from Christ, the beginning of the creation of God! **It is a fearful thing in the sight of God to have light and not to walk according to it.** In all the great theological works you will not find the new creation taught; and yet the authors were true godly men.

Why then was not the church spued out of Christ's mouth long ago? Because they had no light. Now, when we have light, if it prove ineffectual to produce Christ, we are nauseous to Him. All through Scripture we find instances to prove what I am saying. I say, then, a Laodicean has light; but man in nature is his object, and not Christ.

Examples of Light without Power

The first example I find is that of **Eve**. She had light, but she did not act up to her light. The word of God told her not to eat of the tree, and she did. It was a very bad case I admit, but it is a case. I give up the light in self-consideration; she had the pure light in a state of innocence; it was perfect light from God Himself; and what a power of sin was that in her when she said, I will give up the light and please myself. That was Laodicean in principle; and when the church gets to that state the Lord says, It does not suit Me. It cannot be of any use.

There are more examples of this in the word that I could possibly think of or put together now; but one or two will show you how the principle of the evil comes in. Who was it helped the children of Israel into idolatry? No one less than **Aaron**, the brother of Moses. Was there a want of light there? No; he had plenty on light, but he wanted to please the people. He was the one who was to carry out the words that Moses gave him from God, and this very man, whilst Moses was gone up the mountain to God, says, Give me your gold, and I will make a calf for you. People talk of light, and are boastful of it; but with the knowledge

of that light, I say, take care that you keep out the human element.

If you are ministering to man in any way, no matter how – be it in your house, your furniture, your dress, anything – you are just paving the way for Laodicea, you are helping it on, for you have got light and are not walking in the practical power of it. It is a point that must be settled practically. The crisis is coming when people will say: There is plenty of light. They are trying to improve man by it, and Christ really is unthought of.

Can you say people are more for Christ now than they used to be? I know that years ago saints used to be far more for Christ with less light than they are now. I turn to another case, in 1 Samuel 15. The point to get hold of, and it is a difficult one if a person does not work it out in his own heart, is that we are the people who are to blame, because by giving a place to the human element in our preaching and teaching, we have produced a type of Christianity which is very human.

In this chapter king **Saul** is sent to destroy Amalek. There is no mistake about what he is to do; he is not in the least ignorant; yet he keeps what suits himself, while he destroys the vile and refuse. He could not say he was not able to walk up to the light; but he spared the best, that which ministered most to man, what most pleased himself. Again, in 2 Kings 5, **Gehazi** is sent to communicate the truth to Naaman. Gehazi has the truth; but, when the prophet will not take anything from Naaman, he will. This is the principle. "*Went not mine heart with thee*", says the prophet, "*when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants?*" – all to suit himself. Then he adds: "*The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow*".

That is a Laodicean. He had light, but he considered for himself; he had not self-control, not self-mortification enough, to keep himself from coveting things that belong to Naaman.

I turn now to the New Testament, to Matthew 16. Here the Lord says to **Peter**: "*Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven*". The greatest light is shown to Peter; nothing could have been more wonderful than the Father giving such a revelation to him; it was light of the highest order. He had been given this light about the church. And, would you believe it, that this very man, in this very same chapter, foreshadows what a Laodicean is! He has the light about the church, but he will not have the cross.

Read farther on: "*Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall from not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*". Thus it is possible that the person who has the greatest light may make the greatest mistake. Peter wants to spare the man. How differently the apostle Paul uses the cross! "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*".

If this be so, what is left of you? Why, the new creation, and nothing else. That is what is left – a new creation, not only a new creature. The same Person who was going to build this wonderful structure, the church, is the One who will set aside man in His cross.

Oh, says Peter, I do not like that! Then, says the Lord, you are Satan. That is exactly the principle of the thing, and this is where we have to judge ourselves. The light is here, and the question is whether I am bringing out that upon earth which will shine out in the new Jerusalem. It was thus that the Lord left His disciples here. He could say of them: "*All mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them*".

Truly we have failed in this; but He turns round in the book of Revelation and says: You are the Bride to Me, though you have failed in everything else. I make only one more remark. The apostle says in 2 Timothy 1: "*All they which are in **Asia** be turned away from me*". It was not that they had turned away from Christianity, but that they would not have Paul's teach-

ing; they would not have Christ instead of the man here.

And when you leave Christ out of Christianity it is Laodicean, and sinks into Babylon; when you leave Christ out of Christianity Christ does not want the church. I would warn you to see to it, that the more light you have, the more you exclude the human element.

People have gone on for 1800 years, knowing but little and with but little light; and till the light came, the Lord, as it were, says, I tolerate it all. But now all is changed. We can no more speak of the ignorance: the light has been given us. **If the light increase, be careful to see that the light produces Christ in you practically.**

The Remedy for Laodiceanism

And now, having shown you what a Laodicean is, I will show you the remedy for it, how the Lord can keep you from being one, and how He can deliver you if you now are one.

He says, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me*". It is not any particular truth He brings in; He brings in Himself. He says: I will make you know Me in the intimacies of daily life; I will come and sup with you and then you shall learn what it is to sup with Me. I will throw Myself into all your circumstances, and then you will come to Mine. We get the practical illustration of it in John 11 and 12. First, the Lord walks beside Mary to the grave of Lazarus, and weeps with her there. And then she says, anointing Him for His burial: This world, with all its beauty, is nothing to me! He is gone out of it, and I have buried it all with Him in His grave. The day we live in is a critical one. I am sure it ought to be a solemn thought that we are a corrupting instead of a sanctifying people, when we propound light without promoting and manifesting Christ, the new creation. The Lord lead our hearts to understand how we may thus only injure souls instead of being a blessing to them.

The apostle tells us in Timothy that unless we have conscience about what we believe, we shall make shipwreck. May we take the subject to heart for His name's sake!

Corinth's Problem

Joel Portman

The multiplicity of problems that perplexed the assembly in Corinth seems almost amazing to us, though it only indicates that there can be many similar situations that exist in assemblies in all eras. Similar reading of the Lord's letter to the seven churches of Asia indicates that there were conditions that were contrary to the Lord's Name and character in almost every one, needing His correction to cleanse and revive them. It might be easy for any existing assembly of our day to stand aloof and proclaim that there are no conflicts between believers, no deviations from the scriptural pattern, nor any failures in faithfulness that are found in them. However, this may only indicate the condition that is exposed in Laodicea, where the believers failed to recognize the actuality of their state before the Lord. It is a condition similar to that of Israel, when they protested, with the prophet's rebuke, "*How canst thou say, I am not polluted,*" (Jer. 2:23). God saw them as they truly were, not as they thought they were.

There is a constant need to compare our present condition and practices with the truth and pattern of the New Testament. It may be satisfying to don "rose-colored glasses" and think that there is nothing that would elicit the Lord's rebuke, but to do so would replicate the pattern of believers in Corinth, when they wrote to Paul, but failed to ask him or mention to him the fundamental problems that were his greatest concern. He addresses those conditions without being asked, having full knowledge of the basic issues that they were ignoring, and as a result, we have the benefit of such faithful instruction that makes us more responsible.

Very few seem to identify the cause that was underlying their various areas of failure, which we will consider in this article. It seems that a careful consideration of a theme that Paul returns to in both epistles to the Corinthians indicates the cause of their deviations from apostolic teaching that they had received. That underlying cause was their failure to separate themselves completely from the practices and association with the idol's temple and from the pagan society around.

Notice the lengthy dealing with this subject in 1 Cor. 8-11:1. Paul clearly shows them in ch. 8, that continued interaction with this society was impinging on the consciences of their fellow-believers and potentially might cause that "weak" brother to fall. So on that basis, they should cease the practice. In ch. 9, he presents his own example for them to follow, so that they might recognize that this continuation limited their ability to serve the Lord and to receive the Lord's reward for their service. Then in ch. 10, he introduces Israel's example of presumption that resulted in their failure and condemnation in the wilderness journey (a form of failure that constantly plagued them all days of their OT history). Then he shows them the incompatibility of their participation in these activities with the privileges and benefits that they received from the Lord's table. Again, he uses Israel's peace offering as an example of the exclusivity of that form of fellowship as opposed to fellowship at the idol's table.

Then the same theme is suggested in 1 Cor. 15:33, though that may not be so clear in our Bibles. Some suggested translations of this verse include, "bad companionships corrupt good manners," (KJV Lit Trans), "evil associations corrupt good habits," (EMTV), and other similar renderings. Their continued association with and assimilation of the philosophies of the pagan society was affecting their lives and bringing in bad morals (seen in their practices) along with wrong thinking. While not directly referencing the idol's temple and the paganism of their environment, it definitely seems to suggest that this was in the background of the apostle's mind.

In 2 Cor. 6:14-18, Paul powerfully argues against any continuation of such fellowship. It was an unequal yoke with unbelievers, a partnership, a fellowship of two different, incompatible elements. His ultimate point is that there can be no agreement between the temple of God and idols, with emphasis on their being "temple of the living God," and thus enjoying fellowship with Him. (The only times that believers or a local assembly are called "temple of God" are in the two Corinthian epistles. This suggests that the Spirit of God is emphasizing its sanctity and felt reality of

God's living presence in contrast to the empty temples of their world.) Therefore, his ultimate mandate to them is to completely come out from them and maintain absolute separation, without any contact with any associated contamination, with the promise of a close relationship with God as their father. These elements were contrary to His nature, and those who were professedly enjoying relationship with Him, could not continue their involvement in that which was contrary to His will and holiness.

We must emphasize that separation is not isolation, as ascetics and hermits have practiced at times. We live in the world, but we are not of it. Separation is also not a negative principle; rather it is essential for a believer's protection and preservation. It is, at its base, a condition of the mind that subjects all to the standard that is compatible with the will of God and the honor of His Name. The recognition that a believer is intimately identified with the Lord and bears His Name, will control the activities of the life. It is a high calling, and one that carries with it the responsibility to respond correctly to all that would impinge our lives each day.

What was the Idol's Temple?

What does it represent in our day?

In the environment and culture of a Greek city of a cosmopolitan city like Corinth, the idol's temple was more than simply a religious site that was occupied with ceremonial worship of their particular god or gods (or goddesses). The idolatrous environment and influence of the temple and city would have affected the entire culture, societal mores, and philosophies of the people. It would have been difficult to escape the influence of an environment that was essentially pagan, so that it would have influenced all activities of the people. In addition, the background of these believers (for many) was immersed in the same practices that they had been delivered from.

It is true that the actual details of practices in or linked with the temples of Aphrodite, Apollos, and Poseidon are somewhat vague; however, it is widely accepted and supported that the gross immorality and licentiousness that was connected with religious prostitution was a part of the city culture. Some have

indicated that 1,000 religious prostitutes were an active part of the religious practices of the temple of Aphrodite, but Paul clearly points out more than that. It was an environment that involved demonic activities, and that the practices themselves were identified with their associated demons. 1 Cor. 10 reveals that social meals, buying meat in the markets, and other daily activities had the potential to bring one into contact with this element.

Our world's environment isn't much different socially or spiritually, though it appears in a different form in our country. It is yet primarily centered on self and self-pleasing; entertainment rules the day and is often referred to as the biggest form of religion for many. There is always a tendency on the part of believers to desire acceptance with others of this world, and this is encouraged by the efforts of the devil. As long as we have the flesh, there will be a drawing toward the things that please the flesh, and this will always lead a believer away from God.

Effects of Society on the Believers

There was a philosophical mindset that prevailed in Corinthian society. Their philosophies emphasized man's reason over revelation, trying to come to an understanding of the invisible on the basis of what was visible. This resulted in a society that was partially based on the mythology of the Greek gods and goddesses and partly influenced by humanistic, rationalistic reasoning. Seneca wrote that "no other effect could possibly be produced, but that all shame on account of sin must be taken away from men if they believe in such gods," as were depicted by public works of art. The lives of pagan gods and goddesses epitomized a lifestyle that was hedonistic and sensualistic. The impact of this mode of thinking was clearly seen in the degeneration of the Corinthian believers so that they exalted man's reasoning above the revealed truth of the gospel (as seen in ch. 1) and permissively tolerated immorality between a man and his mother (or stepmother, possibly) in ch. 5.

Our societal mores are not far removed from those of Corinth, substituting man's intelligence and perceptions for and above Divine truth and resulting in the degeneration of mor-

als and acceptable behavior. When Divine principles are discarded as the basis for truth and thought, relativism rushes in to take its place, so that what is considered to be right for the individual demands to be accepted by all others. This is why it is vital for a believer in Christ to saturate the mind with the truth of God's Word so that we might be conformed to it in thought and behavior, and be transformed entirely (Rom. 12:1-2). These verses emphasize that it is essential that we don't allow the world to force our conformation in thought, word and deed, but rather allow God's Word to renovate and renew our minds.

That same form of philosophical reasoning denied the eternal future of the soul and personal accountability to God, substituting (according to some) a naturalistic explanation for life. Some Greek philosophers believed in the transmigration of the soul through different life forms over a period of 3,000 years, ending in human existence again. We can see how this denied the truth of the resurrection that Paul so ably defends in 1 Cor. 15, since it was a truth that was contrary to Divine revelation, contrary to the reality of a living Christ, and removed the motivation for all Christian faithfulness and service. "*Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,*" was the motto of such people. A believer in Christ must exclude this form of reasoning from his mind, and never allow this philosophy to influence his life. Our life is linked with Christ, who died and rose again, and our future is to be with Him (Col. 3:1-2).

Other influences of the Greek philosophies and religion can be seen in the disorders at the Lord's supper, the exalting of mystery types of gifts, such as speaking in tongues over revelation of divine truth through prophets, including Paul's apostolic authority. Many other grave problems had been allowed among the believers, all of which Paul deals with masterfully in these remarkable and essential epistles. We do well to take heed and apply these principles to ourselves personally as well as to local assemblies that desire to remain faithful to the Lord and to His Word. The exhortation to the assembly in Philadelphia was not with regard to their greatness or large numbers; it was that they had "*kept my word and hast not denied my*

name." (Rev. 3:8). May the Lord stir and strengthen us to do the same!

SOUNDING BRASS, TINKLING CYMBAL

Take these two words together, since they both occur in I Cor. 13:1—the only time Paul uses them, and because the lessons derived from the use of them elsewhere are so closely akin. The A. V. renders them “sounding” and “tinkling”—both words conveying the idea of useless, meaningless, discordant noise. This is what the love-less man is like, though his speech be as silver and his oratory that of a Demosthenes. Without **love** he is just an unpleasant noise.

Luke uses the former of the two words in his report of the Lord's prophetic discourse (chap. 21:25) for the roaring of the waves, a noise that may temporarily excite wonder, but which becomes monotonous and wearisome. It is a noise that effects nothing; no result ensues therefrom. Even so is the **sounding** of the preacher or teacher whose service is not the outcome of a God-wrought love in his soul. His powers of speech may astonish, but they do not edify; he becomes to his heart-weary hearers just a noise; harsh, discordant, meaningless.

The second of the words is used by Mark (chap. 5:38) for the insincere wailing of the women, hired for the purpose, in the chamber of death. Matthew bluntly calls them people making a noise (chap. 9:23). Browne, in his *Hebrew Antiquities*, describing the custom, remarks, “The wailing was loud and long (usually lasting seven days), and was kept up with the aid of professed mourning women.” Amos doubtless refers to such professional mourners when he speaks of such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing (chap. 5:16). Jeremiah, too, speaks of the mourning women and calls them cunning, that is, clever at their art (chap. 9:17).

Think of the hollowness of it all! One does not expect much depth of grief on the part of an undertaker's man who assists at a funeral, but his sympathy is quite respectable compared with that of persons who gain their livelihood by making a wailing noise around the bed on which lies the corpse of some person whom they never knew. Wailing, indeed! Could insincerity go further? Yet that is the word used for the noise made by the man who speaks with eloquent lips without the love that is of God shining in his soul. He is just a nasty noise, a clanging cymbal.